

**A Study of the significance of Using Newspaper as an instrument to develop Reading and
Comprehension Skills for Learning of English as a Second Language**

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Abstract

The present paper entitled ‘A Study of the significance of Using Newspaper as an instrument to develop Reading and Comprehension Skills for Learning English as a Second Language’ states the issue of using an important media, namely newspapers (both printed and electronic variety) as a source of not only getting access to information but also an effective way of learning and mastering the English language. The main purpose of this study is to cultivate extensive reading habit in English as well as to encourage knowing the culture norms of the targeted language by using the effective & popular newspaper as a teaching tool. The work was based on Descriptive as well as Analytical study as a result of the research carried out with the help of a questionnaire conducted that has been statistically calculated in the form of percentages to the averages of Libyan and Indian participants (students and teachers) who read newspaper and reasons that make the others not read it, through this research the researcher is able to identify as well as see the significant advantages and benefits in using newspaper as teaching material/tool. At the same time, there are a few disadvantages that teachers and students should be aware of when using newspaper. Therefore, the researcher has seen that the use of English Newspapers will certainly encourage and motivate the students and help them to perfect their reading and comprehension skills.

Key words: Newspaper, Reading and Comprehension, EFL, and Teaching Materials.

Introduction:

The present paper is a study on the significance of using newspapers that may contribute in increasing reading and comprehension skills for learning English as a second language.

The ability to read is one of the basic necessities of modern day life. In day-to-day life people encounter material for reading either in their first language or a foreign language. With the instances in normal day-to-day life that require a person to read a written text being numerous, reading becomes essential for everyone. The purposes of reading are not only demand the capacity

to decode printed or written letters but also to understand the meaning of words in the given context. Thus reading assumes much significance in day-to-day life.

Teachers in education rely mainly on textbooks that are mostly outdated. These textbooks are not rich in providing variety in the use of vocabulary as well as in all aspects of life. So, the students tend to use only the words that they learn from the textbooks. For example, most of the books that are used at Libyan secondary schools include short stories that have direct questions which need to be answered along with grammar tasks at the end. There is no social interaction among the students or their teachers in the class except for the answers to the direct questions. This is only the activity in the reading and comprehension class at these schools.

The newspaper articles are been to be highly motivational for students of all ages and students enjoy the variety of reading and visual material included in the newspaper, teachers will help their students comply with state educational standards and prepare them for both standardized tests and real life situations by using newspaper articles and photos in conjunction with specific strategies and rubrics. Therefore, the important function of modern education which is to teach students to use many informational resources available, including the newspaper as a current reference can be achieved.

The study identifies reading and its relation to comprehension as well as the importance of both reading and comprehension for learning English as a second language. The researcher was also able to include the importance of extensive reading regarding the content that he could analyze with the use of newspaper that could develop reading and comprehension skills for the targeted students. The researcher also indicates the benefits of the newspaper as well as the advantages and disadvantages of using newspaper as teaching material with the aspects that the effective types of newspaper should contain.

The researcher aimed to find answers to the questions that he considered as ***General Objectives*** of the study to draw the way through which a framework can be constructed to support the use of newspapers in the classroom; these questions are:

- 1- To what extent can newspapers bring social issues of the target language (English) to the classroom environment?
- 2- To what extent do newspapers improve reading proficiency and comprehension?

The most important purpose that researcher wants to emphasize here is that newspaper should be considered as supplementary material that need to be added along with the text used in

the classroom. Therefore, the researcher was able to identify the real problem of disinterest in Libyan students who are not availing newspaper information with textbooks. Researcher with the help of questionnaire which he developed himself both for students from Libya and India as well as teachers of both the countries was able to draw out certain conclusion. Thus, on the basis of summary and findings the researcher would like to extend some suggestions for further encouragement to read as well as introducing newspaper along with the text in the classroom for widening not only knowledge but helping reading comprehension to grow.

To conclude, this research has recommended using newspaper as authentic material and also to introduce the targeted students to the variety of language that native speakers use, such as the use of expressions and terms, as it exposes them to cultural knowledge and culture interactions of the targeted language. Newspaper can also enhance reading fluency and the students' ability to use context to garner the meaning of unknown words.

Methods and Materials:

Descriptive materials:

- 1- Available books:
 - a- Using newspaper in the classroom.
 - b- Thoughtful literacy using the newspaper.
 - c- Reading for understanding: towards a research and development program in reading comprehension.
- 2- Internet as a technological material.
- 3- Effective newspapers that can be used for the target students ESL to improve their reading and comprehension skills.

Analytical materials:

Student and teacher questionnaire.

The Importance and the Role of reading Comprehension in learning English

Reading comprehension:

Reading comprehension refers to the growth of understanding about whether an individual fully grasps what is read and it is a technique for improving students' success in extracting useful knowledge from text. Reading comprehension is a complex interaction between the text and the reader which is shaped by the reader's prior knowledge, experiences, attitude, and language community which is culturally and socially situated. It is also defined as 'the process of

simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language'. Here the words **extracting** and **constructing** have been used to emphasize both the importance and the insufficiency of the text as a determinant of reading comprehension.

Many students find it hard to completely comprehend what they are reading. This can be hard especially on students of English as a Second Language or English as a Foreign Language who need to read and study on their own for class tests. To overcome on this difficulty and to make those students easily comprehend whatever they read, they have to take in consideration that comprehension entails four basic essential elements.

The role of reading in learning English as a Second Language:

After talking about the importance and purposes of reading in general, we will now move on to the importance of reading in English for students of English as a Second Language. Students whose first language is something other than English are referred to as "English Language Learners" and are often designated as *ESL* in order to receive accommodations and support with their language acquisition goals. English as a Second Language *ESL* or *TESL* also refers to specialized approaches to language teaching designed for those whose primary language is not English.

The four English-language skills; namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing are a form of student capital. These skills that can be divided into receptive skills 'listening and reading', and productive skills 'speaking and writing' are fundamental and paramount in second language learning. In order to develop these skills **Echevarria et al. (2008)** point out that 'For English learners to become fluent in academic English, we [teachers] need to provide structured opportunities in all subject areas to practice using the language" (p.115). So we can estimate that classroom teaching of the target students with the help of the lessons prescribed in these textbook does not satisfy the readers. In addition to the classroom lessons students should practice what they learn in the classroom with their own reading out of the classroom.

The benefits of reading widely and relatively long texts are enormous for students with a relatively high level of proficiency in the language. They have different needs and different problems from those which they faced at lower educational levels. As they have already studied the vast majority of structures and ways of expressing meaning in English, these students need to be well familiar with the intricacies of these structures, rather than learning ever more. Through reading they can have better understanding of "the subtleties and shades of meaning carried by the

use of a particular choice of words in a particular context." Grammatical structures and vocabulary can be learned easily through reading a lot. While students are about to complete their formal study of the "structural elements of English", vocabulary will continue growing.

Intensive reading:

Reading slowly with a lot of concentration and great care of a short text like research paper, academic report, legal and financial document, etc for getting specific details or information is known as Intensive reading. This approach of reading can be used when the objective of reading is to achieve full understanding of logical argument, rhetorical pattern of text, emotional, symbolic or social attitudes and purposes of the author and linguistic means to an end.

Intensive Reading, sometimes called "Narrow Reading", **Brown (1989)** explains that intensive reading "calls attention to grammatical forms, discourse markers, and other surface structure details for the purpose of understanding literal meaning, implications, rhetorical relationships, and the like." He draws an analogy to intensive reading as a "zoom lens" strategy whereas **Alex, N. K. (2000)** say it is a "detailed in-class" analysis, led by the teacher, of vocabulary and grammar points, in a short passage."

Intensive reading is related to further progress in language learning under the teacher's guidance and provides a basis for explaining difficulties of structure and for extending knowledge of vocabulary and idioms. It will provide material for developing greater control of the language and speech and writing. Intensive reading is generally at a slower speed and requires a higher degree of understanding to develop and refine word study skills.

Intensive reading practice can focus more intentionally on essential core vocabulary, patterns of text organization and types of text processing needed to adequately comprehend any text. According to **Antepara, R. (2003)** Intensive reading activities are needed for four main reasons:

- i. To help learners comprehend written texts.
- ii. To become more aware of text organization to better comprehends.
- iii. To learn how to use and monitor effective reading strategies.
- iv. To develop general literacy skills necessary to generate productive expressions in L2.

Thus, intensive reading is a process whereby students read materials which are usually above there linguistics level and contain a large number of unknown vocabulary items and grammatical forms that are difficult for, or unknown to the target learners.

Extensive reading:

After defining intensive reading, it is possible to contrast this with extensive reading in order to get a firm idea about what it involves. Extensive reading is a language teaching procedure where learners are supposed to read large quantities of material or long texts for global understanding, the principal goal being obtaining pleasure from the text (**Bamford, Extensive Reading Activities**). Extensive reading involves a learner reading a large quantity of material which is within, or quite often below, their linguistic or comprehension level. Thereby extensive reading means reading or viewing a large number of print and non-print texts (fiction and non-fiction) with a wide range of topics at the student's reading level and interest. **Worthy, J. & Broaddus, K. (2002)** explains that extensive reading is carried out "to achieve a general understanding of a text." **Long and Richards (1971, p.216)** identify extensive reading as "occurring when students read large amounts of high interest material, usually out of class, concentrating on meaning, "reading for gist" and skipping unknown words." The main aims of extensive reading are to build reader confidence and enjoyment; it is always done for the comprehension of main ideas, not for specific details.

It is important that learners read regularly and cover a large quantity of material. So it is not necessary for the reader to understand each word in the text, as the purpose for the reader to comprehend the overall idea of the written text and gain a general understanding of this text. That is as **Daly, B (2004)** refer to these points when they state that extensive reading is "generally associated with reading large amounts with the aim of getting an overall understanding of the material. Readers are more concerned with the meaning of the text than the meaning of individual words or sentences."(p6).

The importance of using newspaper

The newspapers are regarded one of the most reliable, easily available, less expensive and effective sources of sharing information and knowledge. The newspapers offer us a wide range of knowledge and in-depth analysis of incidents and events. Generally, people prefer to read out the newspapers along with their morning cup of tea or breakfast. The newspapers are published in various languages with a great number of supplements and editions. The reputation of any newspaper largely depends upon its circulation, number of editions, printed copies, and number of readers, coverage and scope. Reading newspapers on regular basis is considered a good habit. It is observed that the students those who read newspapers regularly are more proficient and aware about the happenings that occur near or far away world. By reading newspapers, the students can

gather information on varied subjects including social-political-business issues, sports, entertainment, art, culture, music, education etc. Moreover, the practice of using English newspapers helps the students in the ESL classroom and in the mundane affairs of their life. They can also be encouraged to improve their vocabulary, grammar and thinking skills as regular reading of newspapers and can provide them an opportunity to express and exchange their ideas on a wide variety of issues.

Newspaper according to **Cheyney (1992)** is the textbook that provides up-to-date information on local, state/provincial national and world affairs. **Academic American Encyclopaedia (1989: 171)** also describes newspaper in a broad sense as “an unbound publication issued at regular intervals that seeks to inform, analyze, influence and entertain”. Hence, the researcher observes that English newspapers is an interesting and motivating tool to implement extensive reading in the ESL classrooms, it can provides lots of national and international fresh information and ideas in the different fields that make the students increase their knowledge because they will be interested and unbored while they are reading.

Reading English newspaper, from researcher point of view, emerges as a motivation task which frees the students from the comprehension-evaluation oriented activities carried out for years in the ESL settings. It gives opportunities to the students to voice out their thoughts and reflects upon their reading process. So the reader viewed as a co-participant in the process of transferring meaning to a given text. In this sense, reading entails an active interaction between the so-called reader’s background knowledge and the text itself.

Newspaper as a tool to improve reading and comprehension skills:

The use of authentic material such as news articles in the ELT classroom will turn the newspaper into a powerful tool for encouraging participation and effective sharing of opinions and knowledge, improving reading and comprehension skills and enhancing the knowledge of current affairs for the learners of English as a Second Language. Through the fresh learning tool (English newspapers) of daily news, editorials, features and even advertising, students at the different grade levels can learn educational concepts like math and cost comparison skills, history and current events and how they shape our world, all these things can be occurring while improving reading and comprehension skills. Studies about Newspaper in Education program have shown that using the newspaper in the classroom will help students to:

- i. Improve reading and writing skills by analyzing feature articles, entertainment reviews and the comics.

- ii. Build vocabulary with crossword puzzles and word games.
- iii. Cultivate critical thinking skills through the News' prize-winning coverage of local, national and international news.
- iv. Clarify values and develop real-life decision-making skills through human-interest stories and advice columns.
- v. Broaden their perspective with political cartoons, opinion columns and editorials.
- vi. Apply life skills through classified ads, business and consumer news and recipes.

Analytical Study to the Importance of Using Newspaper for Learning ESL

Besides the descriptive study the researcher had conducted analytical study which is a comparison study with the help of questionnaire to collect data about the experience of reading newspaper in the places where English language is secondly used such as (**India**) where newspaper is widely circulated as well as (**Libya**) where the accessibility of the newspaper is not available.

The collected data are organized and tabulated by using statistical method, table, figure and percentage. The data analyses are given below:

1- Preference activities during free time of Libyan and Indian respondents.

SL NO	Particular	Respondents (students)			
		Libyans		Indians	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	percentage
1	Working on computer	12	48.00	10	40.00
2	Reading	4	16.00	10	40.00
3	Playing football	4	16.00	1	4.00
4	Others...watching TV, gossiping, listening to music...etc.	5	20.00	4	16.00

Total	25	100.00	25	100.00
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Table (1)

The above table shows that 48% Libyan respondents and 40% Indian respondents prefer working on computer during their free time whereas 16% Libyan respondents and 40% Indian respondents spend their free time in reading, 16% Libyan respondents and 4% Indian respondents utilized their time in playing football but 20% Libyan respondents and 16% Indian respondents spend their free time in other activities such as watching TV, gossiping, listening to music...etc. Therefore, it can be concluded that maximum respondents from the Libya as well as India spend their free time working on computer.

2- Preference of respondents to types of article they read.

SL NO	Particular	Respondents(students)			
		Libyans		Indians	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Novels	3	12.00	4	16.00
2	Short stories	10	40.00	13	52.00
3	Magazines	7	28.00	5	20.00
4	Others...real stories, poetry, school books	5	20.00	3	12.00
Total		25	100.00	25	100.00

Table (2)

The above table shows that 12% Libyan respondents and 16% Indian respondents prefer reading novels, 40% Libyan respondents and 52% Indian respondents prefer reading short stories rather than any other type of articles, 28% Libyan respondents as well as 20% Indian respondents read magazines whereas the rest of the percentages which is 20% Libyan respondents and 12% Indian respondents prefer to read others such as real stories, poetry, school course books...etc. Therefore, it can be concluded that maximum respondents from the Libyan and Indian respondents prefer reading short stories.

3- Preference of respondents towards reading newspapers.

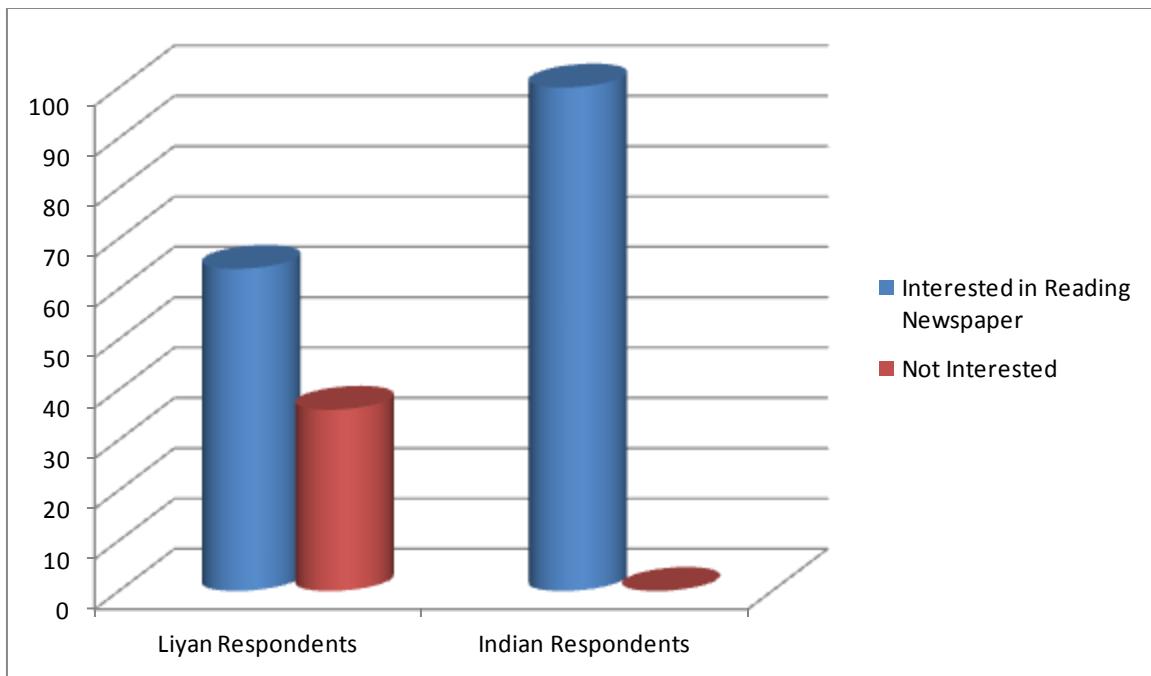


Figure (1)

The above figure shows that 64% Libyan respondents and 100% Indian respondents are interested in reading newspapers while only 36% Libyan respondents are not interested in reading newspaper. Therefore, we can conclude that maximum Libyan as well as all Indian respondents are interested to read newspaper.

4- Reasons of not reading newspaper.

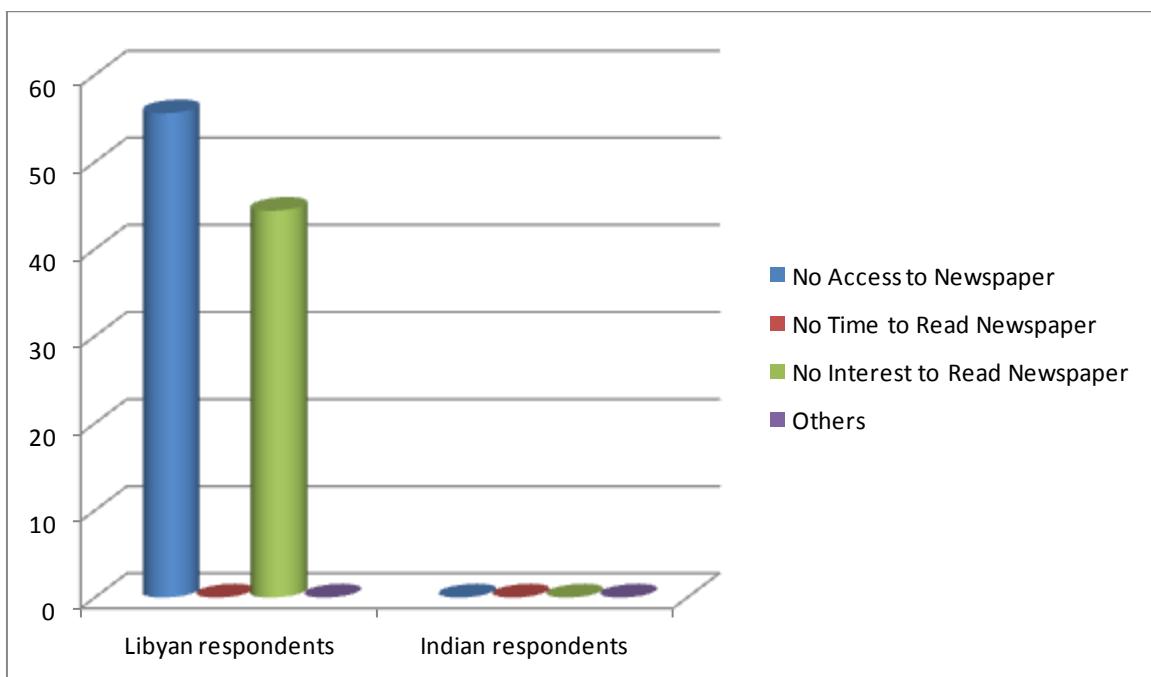


Figure (2)

Nine Libyan respondents out of twenty-five and zero out of twenty-five Indian respondents are not reading newspaper, so the above figure shows that 55.6% Libyan respondents referred to the reason discouraging them to read newspaper is that there is no access to newspaper and 44.4% are not interested to read newspaper. Therefore, it can be concluded that maximum Libyan respondents mentioned that the reason of not reading Newspaper is because of inaccessibility of newspaper whereas there is no Indian respondent mentioned any reason because 100% Indian respondents are interested to read newspaper as it had been clarified in the previous chart.

5- Period of time spent for reading Newspaper by the respondents.

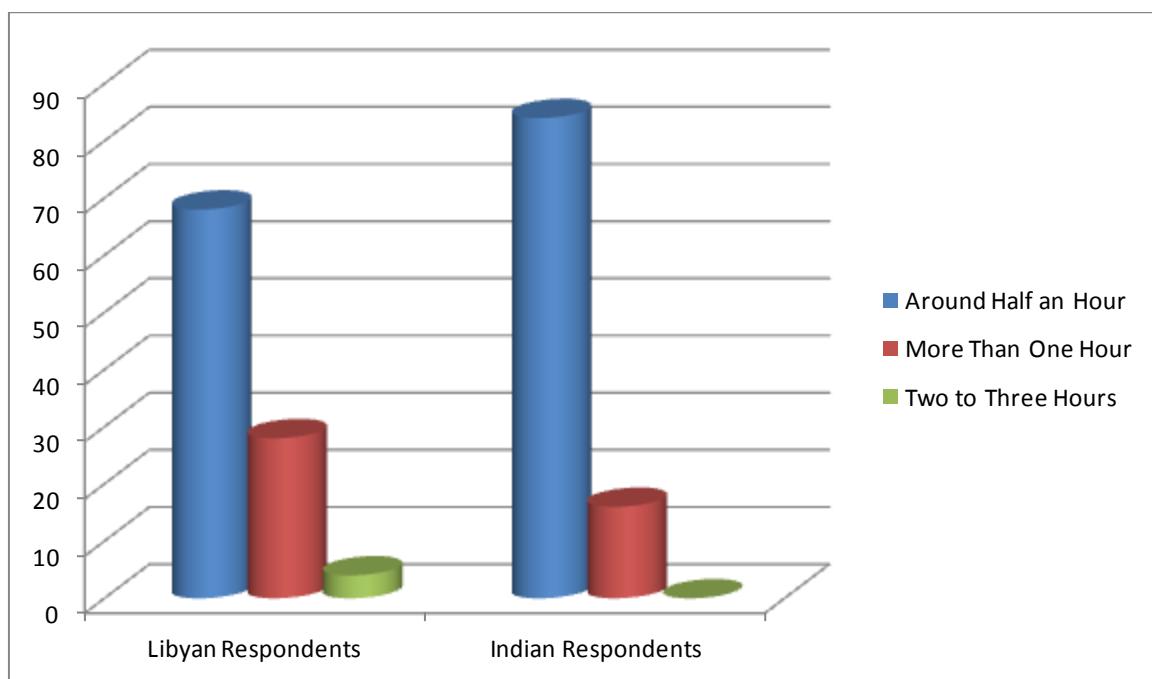


Figure (3)

The above figure shows that 68% Libyan respondents and 84% Indian respondents spend around half an hour a day reading Newspaper, 28% Libyan respondents as well as 16% Indian respondents spend more than one hour whereas, the lowest percentages are 4% Libyan respondents and zero% Indian respondents spend two to three hours a day Reading Newspaper. Therefore, it can be concluded that maximum respondents from both Libya and India spend around half an hour a day Reading Newspaper.

6- Opinion of the respondents regarding understanding English Newspaper.

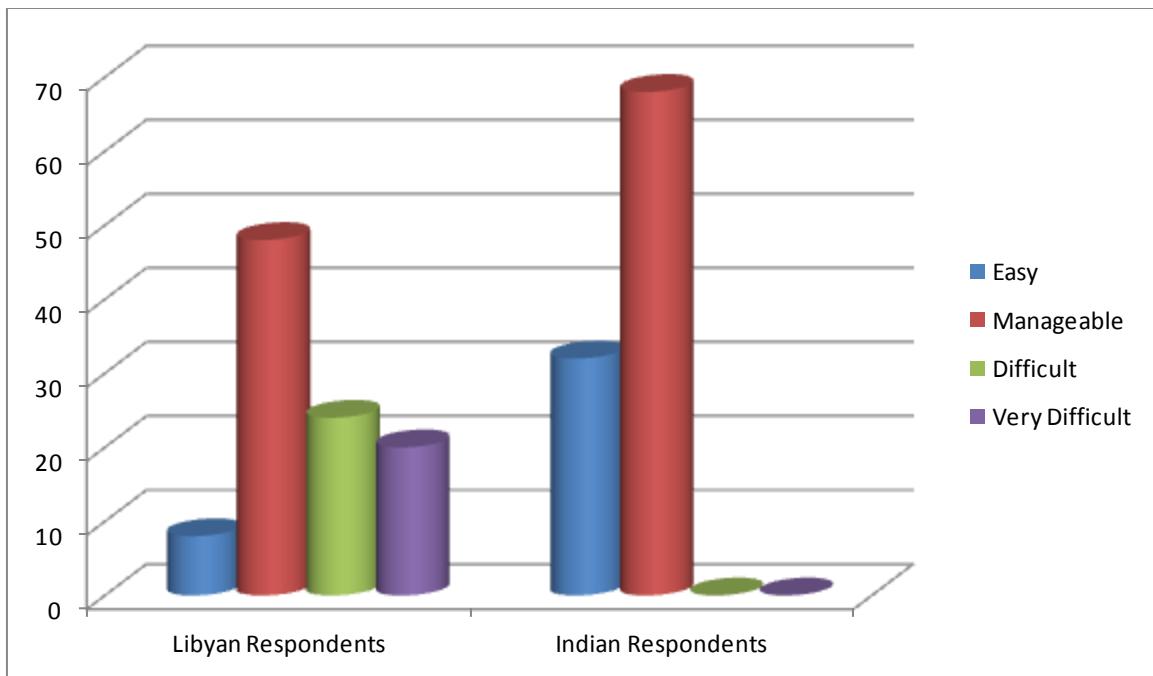


Figure (4)

The above figure shows that 8% Libyan respondents and 32% Indian respondents consider it is easy to understand English Newspaper, 48% Libyan and 68% Indian respondents referred to the Newspaper as a manageable tool whereas 24% Libyan respondents and 0% Indian respondents referred to the newspaper as difficult, finally 20% Libyan respondents and 0% Indian respondents referred that it is very difficult tool to be understood in the classroom. Therefore, it can be concluded that maximum respondents referred to English Newspaper as manageable tool to be understood in the classroom.

7- Opinion of the respondents regarding Newspaper is helpful to improve Reading and Comprehension Skills besides textbook.

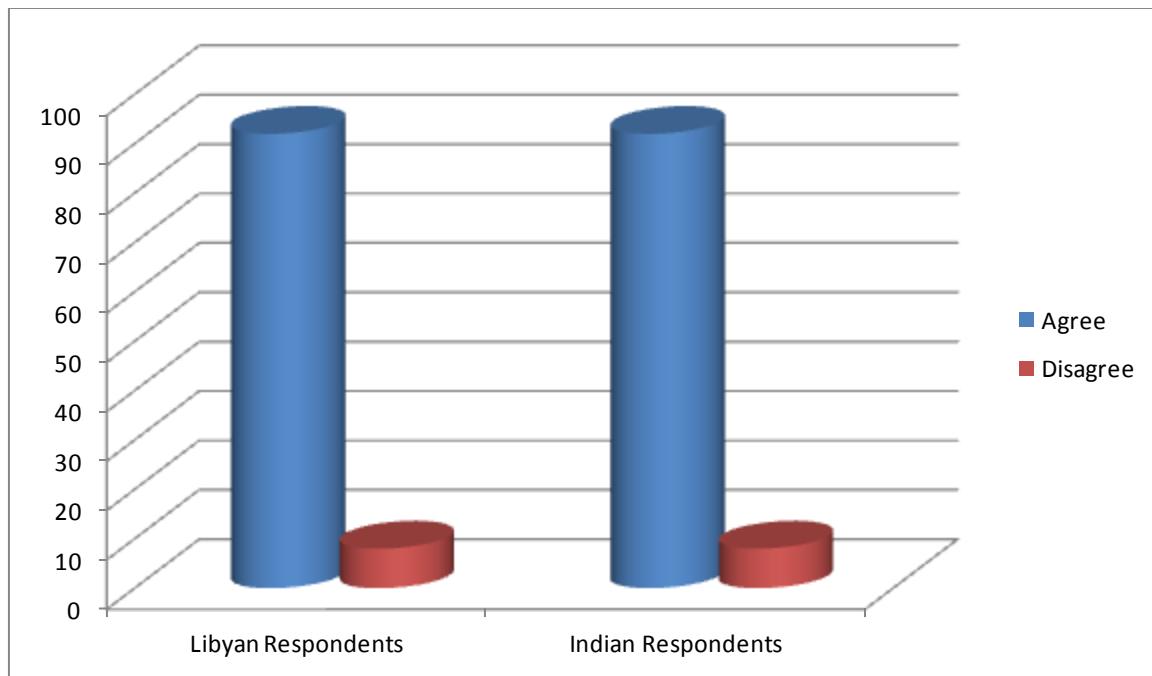


Figure (5)

The above figure shows that 92% Libyan respondents as well as the same percentage of Indian respondents agree with the benefits of Using English Newspaper besides English Textbook to improve Reading and Comprehension Skills whereas, only 8% Libyan respondents as well as the same percentage of Indian respondents have not agree. Therefore, it can be concluded that maximum respondents from both Libya and India agreed with the benefits of Using Newspaper besides English Textbook.

- 1- **The previous experience of the teachers regarding Usage of English Newspaper as Teaching Material.**

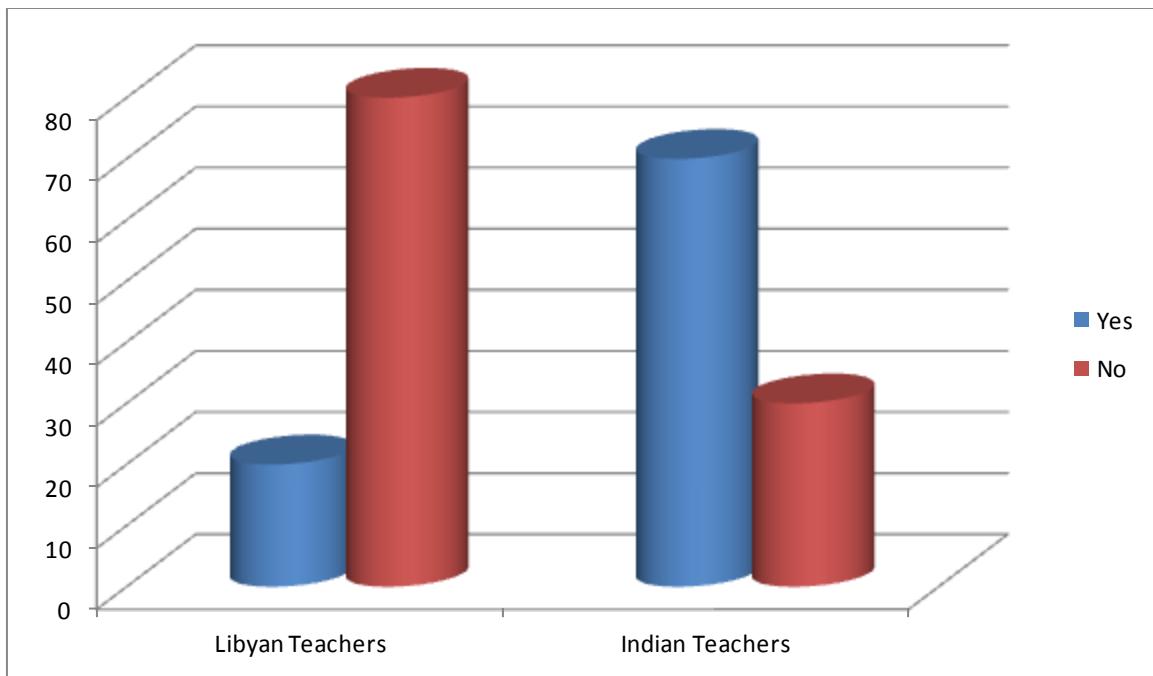


Figure (6)

The above figure shows that only 20% Libyan respondents had used Newspaper as Teaching Material in their schools whereas, the rest of them who had never ever used it equal to 80% respondents, but in India it seems oppositely 70% respondents who used the Ne wspaper and only 30% respondents did not use it. Therefore, we can conclude that maximum Libyan respondents did not use the Newspaper, while oppositely the maximum Indian respondents had used English Newspaper at school as Teaching Material.

2- Reasons for not Using Newspaper as a Teaching Material.

(N= 8 for Libyan, N= 3 for Indian teachers)

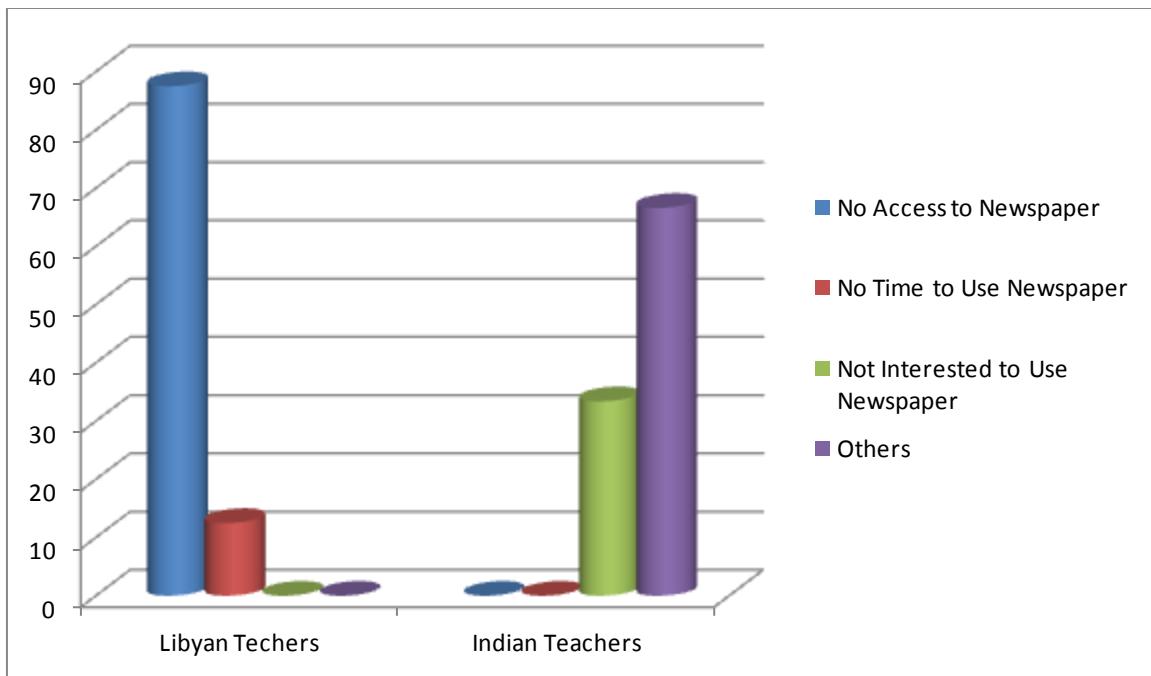


Figure (7)

Eight Libyan respondents out of ten and only three out of ten Indian respondents have never used Newspaper as Teaching Material at school, so the above figure shows that 87.5% Libyan respondents did not use Newspaper because there is no access to the Newspaper and the other 12.5% Libyan respondents could not use the Newspaper at school because there is no time for using it, whereas 33.4% Indian respondents did not use the Newspaper because they are not interested to use it and 66.6% have another reasons. Therefore, it can be concluded that according to the maximum Libyan respondents, inaccessibility of the newspaper makes them unable to use it at school whereas according to the maximum Indian respondents, other reasons prevent them to use it.

3- Opinion of the teachers regarding Using English Newspaper in the Classroom.

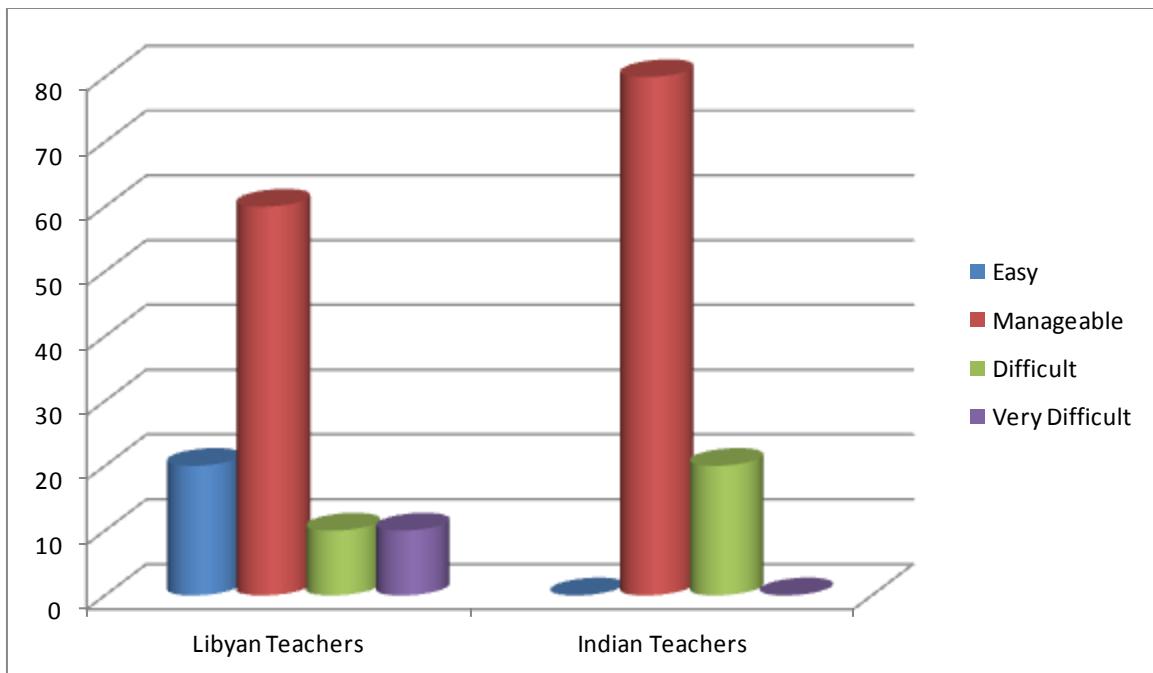


Figure (8)

The above figure shows that 20% Libyan respondents and 0% Indian respondents said it is easy to use English Newspaper in the classroom, 60% Libyan respondents and 80% Indian respondents said it is manageable, 10% Libyan respondents said it is difficult as well as other 10% Libyan respondents said it is very difficult and the rest of Indian respondents (20%) said that it is difficult to use it. Therefore, it can be concluded that the maximum Libyan and Indian respondents said that Newspaper is manageable tool that should be used in the Classroom.

Summary/Findings:

The major conclusion attained from the response of the Libyan and Indian students questionnaire:

- ❖ The Libyan as well as Indian students were found equally interested in Reading Newspaper in their free time.
- ❖ The Libyan students who were not Reading Newspaper due to poor accessibility of the Newspaper.
- ❖ The students of both the countries agree with the statement “students can build vocabulary with crossword, puzzles and games through the Newspapers”.
- ❖ The students at large from both the countries regarded Newspaper to be used in School Libraries/as well as a Classroom Material is excellent Tool.
- ❖ Libyan and Indian students were of the opinion that English Newspaper is helpful for Class as well as Extra-curricular Activities.

- ❖ Students of both the countries fully agree towards the statement “Newspaper updates enhancing reader’s knowledge”

Relevant opinions drawn from the response the researcher got from the Libyan and Indian teachers:

- ❖ It was also seen that Indian teachers were regularly and consciously Using English Newspaper as a part of the Teaching Material but Libyan teachers did not include it as a Material for Teaching.
- ❖ The inaccessibility of English Newspaper in Libyan made the teachers use it negligibly whereas Indian teachers are Using Newspaper as an important media of teaching because of its easy accessibility.
- ❖ The Indian and Libyan teachers agree with statement “Using Newspaper in the classroom is as effective as textbook to improve Reading and Comprehension Skills.
- ❖ The Indian as well as Libyan teachers agree with statement “Using Newspaper besides the Textbook is beneficial to improve Reading and Comprehension Skills.
- ❖ The Libyan as well as Indian teachers agree with the statement “ students can build vocabulary with crossword, puzzles and games through the Newspaper”
- ❖ The Libyan as well as Indian teachers were of the same opinion regarding the Importance of Using English Newspaper was manageable.
- ❖ They universally for them fully agree with the statement “Using English Newspaper in School Library/as Classroom Material help to improve students Reading and Comprehension Skills”.

Conclusion:

Reading in ESL is one of the most important skills that learners can maintain and develop when joining school. Although, a number of studies have attempted to sort out the precise nature of the interrelationship between component skills and reading, as well as how the development of these skills interfaces with different instructional experiences. It is suggested that students reading and comprehension skills could improve if the various home, social and school factors combined together with the student aptitude and student initiated activities to influence reading and comprehension skills development.

The conducted study was based on the importance of using newspaper to improve reading and comprehension skills for the learners of English as a second language. Newspaper considers not only a source of information but also an effective way of using up-to-date authentic material for improving all English language skills during the reading process.

The analysis study of the experience of reading newspaper in the places where English language is secondly used and newspaper is widely circulated such as India, and where the accessibility of the newspaper is unavailable like in Libya makes it possible to draw the path to cultivate extensive reading habits in English among using an authentic material such as English newspaper by teachers of ESL to improve reading and comprehension skills of their students.

Newspaper is one of the reading materials that have responsibility for creating reading habits, which is seen to be essential for the different levels of the students. But due to the enormous exploration of information published in the form of news in the newspapers, makes it impossible for the students and the teachers in mastering or reviewing all the published news to be read. Under these circumstances the best way of serving the targeted students is by making the tool available to the students by displaying of the newspapers in common places where visitation of students is regular. We also need to educate as well as make the students aware of the best additions of the newspaper which would not only keep them updated with the world around them but also help them to be aware of the resources, academic upliftment, scholarships, research information and scientifically and technology based on information rendered to them through this most easily economically available learning aid.

In accordance to the objectives framed by the researcher, he was able to identify the real problem of disinterest in Libyan students in not availing newspaper information with textbooks. Researcher with the help of questionnaire which he developed himself both for students from Libya and India as well as teachers of both the countries is able to draw out certain conclusion

On the basis of summary and findings the researcher would like to extend some suggestions for encouragement for introducing newspaper along with text in the classroom for widening not only knowledge but helping reading comprehension to grow.

Thus, for improving reading and comprehension skills, the researcher's view is, newspaper should be used supplementary to the textbook in accordance with the students' level of knowledge and they should be helped by their teachers to overcome the difficulties they encounter. And finally students can enjoy reading topics independently based on their own interests even outside the classroom.

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